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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 002013

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/RAMCHAND/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/22/2017  
TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: SECULAR AND ULTRA-ORTHODOX CANDIDATES FACE OFF IN  
JERUSALEM MAYORAL ELECTION

REF: JERUSALEM 01747

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. Nationalist candidate Nir Barkat hopes to win the November 11 municipal election based on his platform of balancing religious and secular needs in the city. Ultra-Orthodox candidate Meir Porush, who would continue policies enacted under current Mayor Lupolianski, hopes to win based on high ultra-Orthodox voter turnout. Both candidates support Israeli construction in East Jerusalem and oppose division of the city. Candidates Arkadi Gaydamak and Dan Biron have polled very low, in spite of Gaydamak's efforts to mobilize Palestinian voters. Palestinian officials called for a boycott of the election, and Palestinian participation probably will be low as in the past. Polling booths will not be available east of the separation barrier, causing some Palestinians to wonder if the Municipality is taking steps to reduce their rights in the city. End Summary.

NATIONAL-SECULAR CANDIDATE BARKAT  
COMMITTED TO ISRAELI CONTROL OF JERUSALEM  
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12. (C) Secular/nationalist candidate Nir Barkat goes into the November 11 election leading in the polls over ultra-Orthodox candidate Meir Porush. The results will depend on turnout among non-Orthodox voters and secular voter unity. Barkat has appealed to national-religious voters (who supported his rival in 2003) stating that he will encourage Israeli construction in East Jerusalem and create a Greater Jerusalem Council, including settlements like Ma'ale Adumim and the Gush Etzion bloc. He said he will use the Municipality to oppose GoI negotiations on the status of Jerusalem.

ULTRA-ORTHODOX CANDIDATE WILL  
PROTECT RELIGIOUS RIGHTS  
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13. (C) Yitzhak Pindrus, number two on United Torah Judaism's (UTJ) city council electoral list, told PolOff November 9 that UTJ expects Porush to win. Pindrus said polls under-represent Orthodox voters, and that secular voters will not turn out en masse, as Barkat hopes. Pindrus said Porush will continue the policies of Mayor Lupolianski, safeguarding the rights of religious communities in Jerusalem. He said the growing number of ultra-Orthodox Jerusalemites requires additional housing and schools, but that UTJ will also protect the rights of secular Jerusalemites and prevent conflict between the communities. Porush stated publicly that he supports Israeli construction in East Jerusalem and opposes the division of the city.

SMALL, SECULAR CANDIDATES POLL LOW  
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¶4. (C) Two secular candidates have the potential to draw voters away from Barkat on election day. Social Justice's Arkadi Gaydamak has not earned more than six percent of the vote in polls, despite his efforts to court ultra-Orthodox voters and Palestinians. He attended a Palestinian soccer game in al-Ram east of the separation barrier and bought advertisements in Palestinian newspapers. The Green Leaf party's Dan Biron has polled at one percent. Ohad Shem-Tov, number two on the Green Leaf electoral list, told PolOff the party hopes to win two seats on the city council but is not trying to draw voters away from other candidates.

PALESTINIANS BOYCOTT ELECTIONS, FEAR  
LOSS OF JERUSALEM RESIDENCY RIGHTS  
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¶5. (C) Palestinian Authority (PA) officials have called for a boycott of municipal elections, saying that participation legitimizes Israeli control over the city. Chief of the Religious Courts Shaykh Taysir Tamimi issued a fatwa against Palestinians voting, and a Palestinian candidate, Zuhair Hamdan, withdrew before the lists closed. East Jerusalem residents believe most Palestinians will not vote because, as one resident told PolOff, "The Municipality does nothing for me; why should I vote for them?"

¶6. (U) Press reported that the Municipality and the GoI Ministry of Interior will not place ballot boxes in neighborhoods east of the separation barrier, citing security reasons. PA officials recognize that most of the 100,000 Jerusalem ID holders who are affected would not have voted,

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but they publicly questioned if this was a step toward limiting East Jerusalem residents' rights. Rami Nasrallah, Director of the International Peace and Cooperation Center (IPCC), said marginally more East Jerusalemites might vote this year to demonstrate that Jerusalem is their "center of life" and protect their status as Jerusalem residents.

WALLES